

Medicine and Science in Postage Stamps

By W. J. Bishop and N. M. Matheson. Pp. 82 (33 plates). (London: Harvey and Blythe, Ltd.; H. K. Lewis and Co., Ltd., 1948.) 7s. 6d. net.

WHILE the emphasis in this little book is on medical interest, the authors also refer briefly to scientific workers in the widest sense who have been commemorated by special stamps; among whom are Tycho Brahe, Ampère, Descartes, Linnæus, Mendel, Berthelot, Edison, Marconi and the Curies. The book contains a 16-page account of the reasons for the issue of such stamps; there are short sections on portrait stamps, Red Cross stamps, various tuberculosis stamps, illustrations of hospitals and other medical institutions, the use of medical symbols and apparatus, and other stamps of medical interest. There follow thirty-three plates giving black-and-white reproductions of 148 such stamps from the authors' collections. The book ends with 23 pages of biographical notes, arranged alphabetically, relating to the portrait stamps mentioned. There is also a bibliography.

In addition to stamp collectors among the medical and related professions to whom the book is specifically addressed, it may well arouse interest in this instructive hobby among others interested in scientific developments.

Meson Theory of Nuclear Forces

By Wolfgang Pauli. Second edition. Pp. vii+69. (New York and London: Interscience Publishers, Inc., 1948.) 12s.

THIS second edition differs from the first (reviewed in *Nature*, p. 418; 1947) only in a few short sections, where instead of older experiments some more recent ones are discussed (concerning the angular distribution of proton-neutron scattering, p. 56, and the consequences of strong coupling theory, p. 64). The most interesting feature of the new edition of the little book is its preface, where the author refers to new discoveries incompatible with the present theory, such as the existence of different kinds of mesons and the absence of negative meson capture by the lighter nuclei. He hopes that artificial production of mesons recently achieved in the United States will bring forth a great change of the whole situation in the near future.

Isomerism and Isomerization of Organic Compounds

By Ernst David Bergmann. (Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn: Lectures on Progress in Chemistry.) Pp. xi+138. (New York and London: Interscience Publishers, Inc., 1948.) 21s.

THIS little book presents the material of six lectures delivered by the author during 1945-46, and deals only with those aspects of its subject which have most interested him. This limitation is made clear in the preface, and the would-be reader should not be misled by the wide title of the book into expecting even an outline of the whole field. The book is a very personal approach to the subject, and presents an individual outlook which will probably not commend itself to the majority of qualified readers; thus, it will surprise many to find, in a chapter entitled "Mechanism of Substitution Reactions; Racemization and Walden Inversion", only one reference, and that purely experimental, to the work of Ingold and his school. Some of the theoretical interpretations are also highly individual and will be

regarded by many as very questionable; for example, the surprising statement (p. 119) that, in the rearrangement of phenyl allyl ether, "a van der Waals' link is established between the unsaturated γ -carbon atom and the ortho position". Although, as the author hopes in his preface, the book may provide "food for thought" for the critical reader, it is certainly not suitable for students, and from this point of view its high price is to be welcomed.

H. N. RYDON

The Faith of Reason

The Idea of Progress in the French Enlightenment. By Charles Frankel. Pp. x+165. (New York: King's Crown Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1948.) 16s. net.

FOR the philosophers of the French *Enlightenment* theirs were grand days. They were grand because the errors of history and of circumstance were at long last understood; reason would put everything right. Thus the enthronement of scientific method; the fields were white to harvest with the fruits of Cartesianism, all ready for the garnering; and this not necessarily against the winter, for such seasons would be mild in future, their edges rounded off by a generous humanity, which quality, by the way, was thought to be identical with reason itself.

The brilliance of these savants is beyond question; what seems odd to us now is their limited imagination, due in the main to a system of metaphysics telling them exactly what they were about to find, and keeping them in fetters while looking for it. Nevertheless, we are assuredly their debtors in the sphere of moral progress.

Much of the temper of the *philosophes* is of concern to society to-day, especially when the uses of science are subject to attack, and there is much talk of 'irresponsibility'. Dr. Charles Frankel, aided by the King's Crown Press, has performed a valuable service in producing this monograph. Between its covers can be found a critical, but not pedantic, account of an age at the moment somewhat neglected in the history of thought.

F. IAN G. RAWLINS

Shetland Sanctuary

Birds on the Isle of Noss. By Richard Perry. Pp. 300+32 plates. (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1948.) 25s. net.

THE island of Noss on the eastern side of the Shetland group is a well-known resort of sea-birds, the great cliff known as the Noup of Noss that faces the North Sea being a breeding place of countless kittiwakes, guillemots and razorbills, plus many gannets. In addition, great skuas and Arctic skuas nest on the grassy expanse of the island. These are but some of the bird attractions of Noss. The island well deserves the title of "Shetland Sanctuary" under which Mr. Perry describes it in his latest book.

In this book the author tells us of his five months work on Noss, during which he made his headquarters in the old farm-house, now, alas, falling into disrepair, while his wife and child found a less arduous habitation on the nearby island of Bressay. To appreciate the author's results one must read his careful studies of the great skua, the Arctic skua and the gannet, with sidelights on many other birds. In the space of a brief review it is difficult to give much idea of them, and we must refer the reader to the book itself, which in our opinion is the best Mr. Perry has written.

F. P.